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ABSTRACT

Specialists committed to an examination of speech communication patterns have emphasized the interpersonal aspects of communication over the intrapsychic realities of various subjective statuses. If the rhetorical model operates at a psychological level, invention and disposition might be said to characterize the thinking mode, perhaps growing out of action or interaction, while memory, style, and delivery involve the successful management of the emotions. Rhetorical skills--which allow people to correctly assess their environment, to react to others, to interact successfully with the universe, and to withdraw or go inward to make subjective assessments of and contact with their inner selves--may be useful in achieving emotional equilibrium. Maintaining balance and equilibrium in one's own life may, admittedly, come down to something more than or different from rhetorical skills and/or coping mechanisms; yet this framework may suggest the continuing process of personal growth. (HOD)

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OVER THE RAINBOW, BEYOND THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: RHETORIC AND THE ART OF SELF-RENEWAL

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A paper based upon remarks made at the annual convention of the Central States Speech Communication Association in Lincoln, NB, on April 9, 1983, and presented to Nicholas McKinney Cripe on the occasion of his retirement from Butler University.

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When Mike (McGee) called me several months ago and asked me to present a paper to Mac Cripe on the occasion of his retirement from college teaching, I couldn't say no. Rhetorical theory and method has served me exceedingly well in my professional and personal life and I was anxious to share that reality with a group assembled to honor my "old debate coach." The title you have before you--"Over the Rainbow, Beyond the Yellow Brick Road: Rhetoric and the Art of Self-Renewal"-- was quickly decided upon and Mike and some of his colleagues forwarded titles of appropriate scholarly publications I might wish to investigate. Well, let me tell you--as I began to think more about the topic and do some research on it, I rather wished that I had said no! As many of you know, I am a trained social psychologist who occupies an administrative position with a State mental health authority, and whenever I try to take myself back to a context I left some 20 years ago, I am struck, once again, with how very specialized we all do become and what an impossible task it is to attempt to leap across professional boundaries without losing a lot of ground! All I can hope for here today is that I am able to share my affection for rhetorical training to an extent sufficient to motivate others of you in this room who are expert in the field to properly conceptualize and study some of what I am going to try to articulate.

Let us begin by returning to an earlier time, the golden age of Greece, where individuals struggled with epochal evolutionary changes in many aspects of cultural and social life (perhaps not unlike the very age we find ourselves in) and where, according to Baird (1965), individuals developed a method designed to communicate instrumentally. "Rhetoric, to Aristotle, was 'the faculty of observing in a given case the available means of persuasion'...[,] developing the logical and motivative elements...[and] the implementation of these means in...political, ceremonial, and legal speaking situations.... [wherein the] speaker should make his argument decisive, his personality

appealing, and his audience receptive." (Baird, 1965, p. 7) In the writings of Cicero and Quintilian, moreover, we find a concern for the ethics implicit in developing rhetorical skills. And surely, an evolving social conscience, then as now, demands an ever-increasing sensitivity as to the uses made of the rhetorical method.

So the techniques of invention (and I am drawing heavily from Baird, 1965, and Minnick, 1957, here), which include investigation, analysis, a grasp of the subject matter, ensuring accurate perception; disposition, that is, arrangement, orderly planning, structure; and style, memory, and delivery, or winning belif, discovering and overcoming obstacles to action -- all became stock-in-trade commodities with which generations of individuals were trained in terms of more effectively approaching the world, and, dare I say it, in manipulating others, perhaps even in altering reality? (Surely all of us in this room have written analyses of particular speeches in order to demonstrate their having had a major socio-historical impact of one kind of another. In fact, I believe some of the papers we are going to hear today will touch on this very point.) But the extent to which we have recognized and nurtured the significance of the rhetorical method to intra-psychic states, and to our own individual growth and development-- that is another matter. My perception is that we have done very little in this regard and that's what I want to talk a little bit about, here today.

On the one hand, we might not expect Americans, a peculiarly externalized nation, to waste much time on the "inner journey." That is, of course, something better left to Yogis practicing in the Himalayas or perhaps to deranged individuals who participate in esoteric cults in stranger parts of the world or at least in busier airports than the one serving Lincoln, Nebraska!

But what I find especially fascinating is that even among those specialists who are committed to an examination of speech and communication patterns--in-depth, quantitatively, as they relate to behavioral descriptors, personality traits, perhaps even character disorder (and I am speaking here of Courtright, Millar, Rogers-Millar, O'Donnell-Trujillo, Farace, Bochner, Miller, Baxter, Wilder, and members of both the Palo Alto groups), that even among these individuals the emphasis as far as I can see is very much on the inter-personal aspects of communication and relationship, with little or no regard for the intra-psychic realities of various subjective statuses.

In an interview published in the JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION, Volume 28, Number 4, in the Fall of 1978, in fact, Watzlawick is quoted as acknowledging the significance of these intra-psychic issues while at the same time rather wishing to be done with them. And I quote:

> "...you see, spontaneous change takes place all the time outside of therapy. You have here hit upon a subject that to me is of the far greatest interest nowadays; the question of how spontaneous change occurs. Fortunately, most change takes place without some therapist mucking around with the system. Human change is an ever-present phenomenon, but we know next to nothing about how it comes to be. How does a system pull itself, like Baron von Münchhausen, out of the quagmire by its own pigtail? This happens all the time, but how does it happen? We know precious little about that." (p. 40)

> "...I would have to agree that there is such a thing as communication with what the psychoanalyst would call 'introjects.' I can have a dialogue going on in my mind with a significant person in my life. But for the purposes of our work, I would stay away from researching it. Not because I don't think it exists,but rather because I don't think it can, in any reasonable sense, be utilized or measured or investigated. I know it's a coward's way out, but there you are." (p. 42)

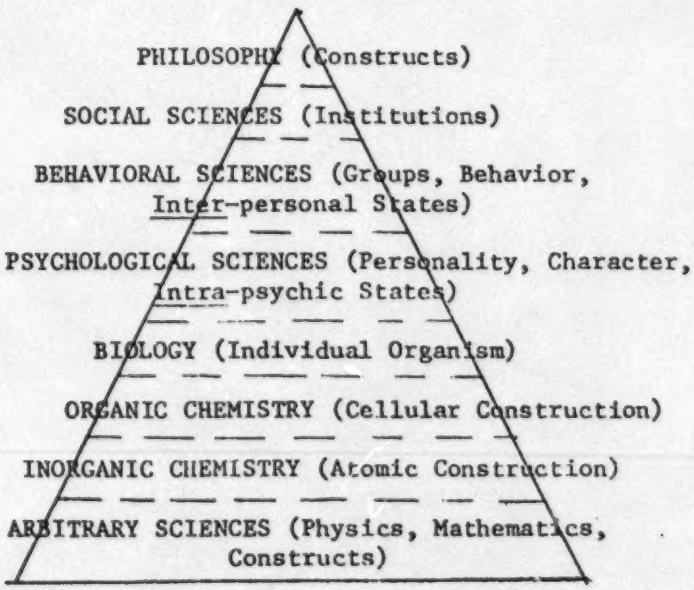
To which I say, "Boo, Mr. Watzlawick!" Only in America, or at least only in the West, would one presume to maintain an expertise in relationship matters between and among human beings while choosing to remain so out of touch

with what at the very least might be going on within one's own psyche! Especially given the recognition of classic as well as modern theorists regarding the (potential) interaction between and among the so-called "objective" and "subjective" states. "To be rid of anything," the I Ching advises, "one must first break completely with it in one's own mind. Attachment is in the mind, so also is detachment." (I CHING: TAOIST BOOK OF DAYS, 1982, p. 47) Mind you, in no way am I discrediting the work already accomplished nor am I discounting the significance of work being done. I am only attempting to lobby in support of some additional work on behalf of intra-psychic (organic) life.

Let me quickly sketch some ideas which come to my mind in this regard, and believe it or not, I want to begin with--you guessed it--the hierarchy of sciences! Take a look at Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

A Hierarchy of the Sciences

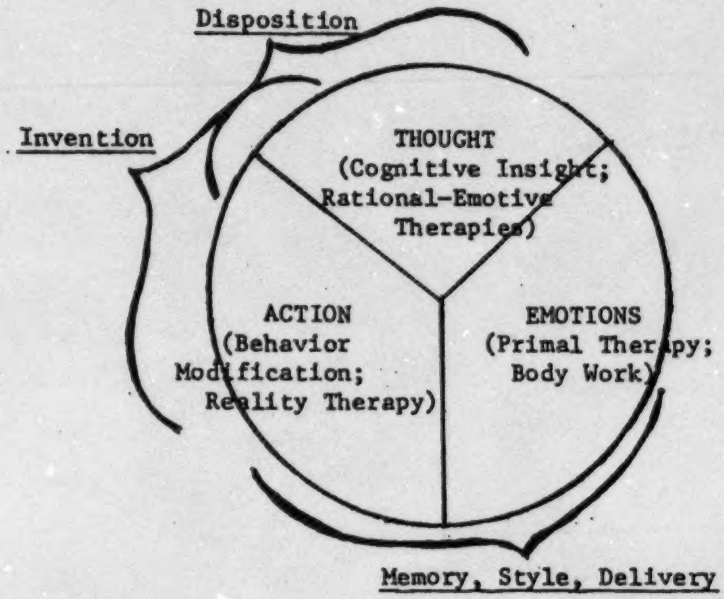

PHILOSOPHY (Constructs)
SOCIAL SCIENCES (Institutions)
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES (Groups, Behavior, Inter-personal States)
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES (Personality, Character, Intra-psychic States)
BIOLOGY (Individual Organism)
ORGANIC CHEMISTRY (Cellular Construction)
INORGANIC CHEMISTRY (Atomic Construction)
ARBITRARY SCIENCES (Physics, Mathematics, Constructs)

What I wish to suggest is that the rhetorical (like the scientific) method may have the capacity for being replicated in a variety of contexts, and that while historically, we may have emphasized the social (political) arena, there is no reason to presume that a rhetorical model might not be operative, as well, say at a psychological level.

For years, theorists have differentiated between the world of "thought," the world of "feelings," and the world of "action." Certainly, any number of therapeutic interventions can be assigned these various compartments. For example, cognitive insight and rational-emotive therapies can be viewed as having greater relevance to the intellectual sphere, primal screaming and the various body therapies to the emotional domain, while behavior modification techniques and reality therapy might rightfully fit into the arena of action. Borrowing from rhetorical theory, might not one also argue that invention and disposition characterize the thinking mode, perhaps growing out of action, or interaction, as one reflects upon it, while memory, style, and delivery certainly have to do with successfully managing the emotions so as to effective impact action?

FIGURE 2

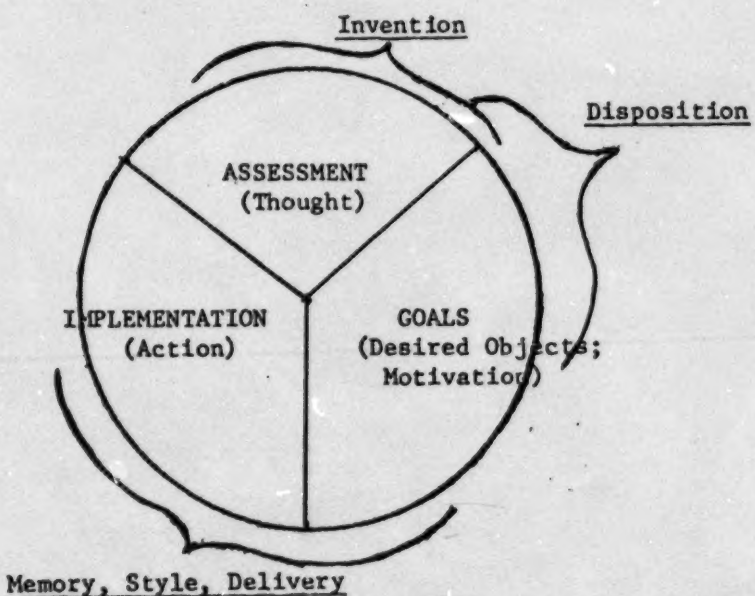
A Psychological Map



In point of fact, this model of "personality" may well be seen as having some parallel with the individual or corporate planning (management) cycle, which we might characterize as follows. (See Figure 3. But note the somewhat different placement of rhetorical categories within this Figure.)

FIGURE 3

A Planning (Management) Cycle



One of the most useful schema linking personal to organizational "mental health" is offered by Jahoda, and refined by Bennis, Argyris, and Schien. One can thus characterize the healthy organism, whether individual or collective, as possessing the following qualities:

> "1. Adaptability--the ability to solve problems and to react with flexibility to changing environmental demands.
>
> "2. A sense of identity--knowledge and insight on the part of the organization of what it is, what its goals are, and what it is to do. Pertinent questions are: to what extent are goals understood and shared widely by members of the organization, and to what extent is self-perception on the part of the organization members in line with perceptions of the organizations by others?
>
> "3. Capacity to test reality--the ability to search out, accurately perceive, and correctly interpret the real properties of the environment, particularly those which have relevance for the functioning of the organization.
>
> "A fourth criterion which is often mentioned, one which in effect underlies the others, is a state of 'integration' among the subparts of the total organization, such that the parts are not working at cross-purposes." (Schein, 1965, p. 97)

Rhetorical theory, anyone?

More recently, high-level wellness types have emphasized the significance of the physiological level (diet and exercise) as well as the spiritual/environment sphere (e.g., values clarification) to these psychological and organizational states, arguing that all of the cited areas, in fact, interact--one upon the other--and that to do work in one area is most often to produce changes in one or more of the others. They further note that to work just a little in several of the areas will produce greater results than becoming exceptionally skilled in only one or two. (Ardell, 1979) This view is typical of what has emerged within the medical sciences in the past 20 or so years, that is, an increasing interest in the interfaces between and among the various traditional scientific levels of analysis. Reference, for example, the work linking

particular personality characteristics with heart disease and with cancer, or documentation suggesting that an affirmative mental attitude, a hygiene of humor, and megadoses of vitamin therapy may significantly correlate with miraculous recovery. (Friedman and Rosenman, 1974; Pelletier, 1977; Cousins, 1979)

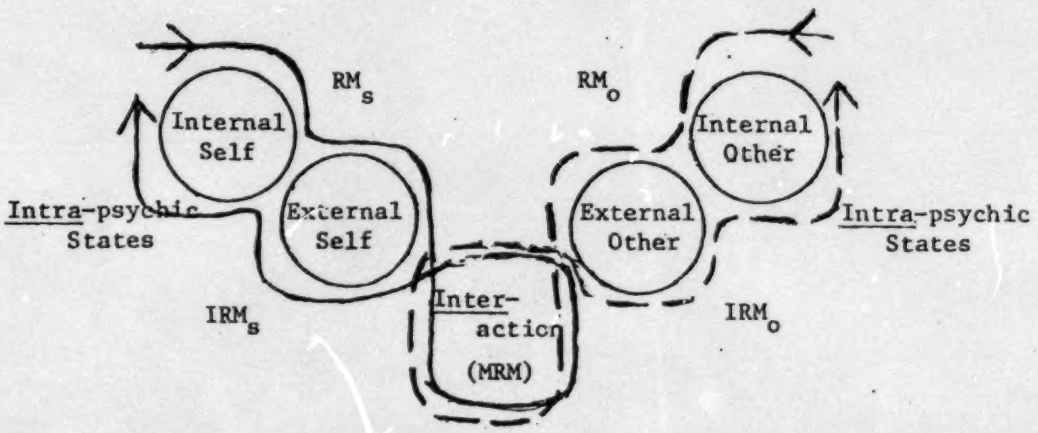
Imagine something like Bateson's "double-bind" theory reexamined in light of a truly inter-disciplinary approach. An early member of the original Palo Alto group, Bateson argued that insanity, something as serious and diagnosable as schizophrenia, even, was actually the result of inappropriate and/or conflicting messages by parents and significant others which set the child up in a "damned if you do/damned if you don't" situation, from which a particularly popular form of escape appears to have been to "go crazy." A useful enough insight, the double-bind, but certainly only a part of the story! To begin with, double-bind thinking permeates the American way of life! Say one thing, mean, and do another. Yet, only a very small proportion of the population exhibit schizophrenic traits, with perhaps a more substantial number harboring latent tendencies. The point is that many individuals appear to have a natural immunity to the emotional distresses that others experience. Still other persons are sufficiently motivated by the challenge of the double-bind environment to find ways to refine and clarify their own thinking. Obviously, something(s) must be going on, intra-psychically at the very least. And who knows what else--diet, metabolism, hormones, genetic programming--may serve to differentiate those who grow beyond sanity toward health from those who carry the scars of these early distortions with them, late into middle-age, sometimes,

and often long after the conflicted environment has been substantially altered for the better.

For myself, I can certainly testify as to the usefulness of the rhetorical method in achieving equilibrium admist the madness of the pre/post-Sputnik era in which I grew up. I have often thought about the significance of my having developed those skills which on the one hand permitted me to correctly assess my environment, to proact toward others, to interact successfully with the Universe, and by the same token, which enriched my ability to withdraw, go inward, make subjective assessments and powerful contact with an "inner self." I wonder if perhaps the rhetorical method is not equally effective in both directions, moving toward and against, as well as away from? (My apologies to disciples of Karen Horney for coopting her more elaborate schema!) Of course, we already know that rhetorical skills serve to facilitate communication within the inter-personal sphere. See Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

A Tentative Model Re:
Intra-Psychic/Inter-personal Statuses

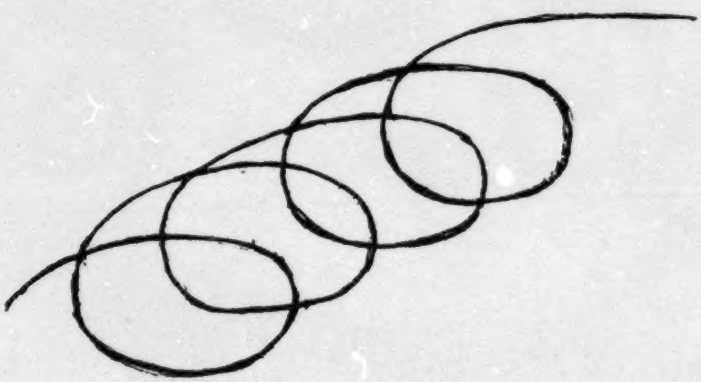


RM = Rhetorical Method (invention; disposition; memory; style; delivery)
IRM = Inverted Rhetorical Method (delivery; style; memory; disposition; invention)
MRM = Mutual Rhetorical Method (to be further conceptualized)

I would not want my depiction of this process to undermine the significance of having familiarity with a wide variety of coping mechanisms as well as facility in knowing how to pick and choose from among them the one(s) most certain to be effective and appropriate in a given situation. Surely, maintaining balance and equilibrium in one's own life may come down to something more than or different from rhetorical skills and/or coping mechanisms. Whatever this cycle may or may not be, I know it is developmental, evolutionary, and moves me "upward and onward" in a state of perpetual personal growth, perhaps not unlike the spiral indicated in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5

A Tentative Model of Personal Growth



NOTE: Each cycle of the Spiral would incorporate process(es) implied in Figure 4.

Of course, I intend to leave each of you with the arduous tasks of further theoretical refinement and data collection. And speaking of data, let's agree to err in the direction of qualitative as opposed to quantitative distortion, okay? The art of rhetoric, remember?

I'd like to close by sharing with you a few examples of the many successes I have had with the rhetorical method in my own life, which is kind of what I wanted to do all along. "...[One's] spiritual creativity," states the I Ching, "is not manifested in...philosophies, creeds, theological dogmas, or political systems, nor in...wisdom, nor in...foolishness. It is manifested by the way...[one] affects and transforms the world." (I CHING: TAOIST BOOK OF DAYS, 1982, p. 88) And please remember as I relate some of my experiences that they could easily be matched by other members of this morning's panel, or for that matter, by literally hundreds of individuals scattered throughout the country.

Over the years, I have been characterized again and again as having a "brilliant mind." I think it is a mind trained in rhetorical theory and methods. I am known as an analyst and problem-solver, par excellence. Again, I'd say I have a well-developed cadre of rhetorical skills. As consultant, therapist, and teacher, the kudos I receive are downright embarrassing. Would you believe things like "best ever" and "perfect?" A civic leader once noted that I was the only person he knew who could give you 8 hours worth of content in about 15 minutes. I have on occasion been asked to accomplish 10-minute"miracle cures." ("Do you have a few minutes to see so-and-so? She's been acting really strange lately and seems awfully depressed.") Several years ago, a student wrote the Dean (among other things) that she knew I was a good educator because I made students feel potent in a world that fostered impotence!

More recently, students characterize their learning experiences as being fun. Earlier this semester, in reveiewing her progress to date, an advanced student noted that my class was "just as it was a couple of years ago... a happening. Never change your teaching techniques," she added, "because they are both outrageous and divine." While many would probably characterize my approach as incorporating heavy doses of traditional pedagogy, along with varied adult education techniques and entertainment strategies, I know that I have had to ask students to remediate themselves in the rhetorical method, so as to bring themselves "up to speed."

I made conscious choices about not having any children of my own, but I have been a significant "agent of socialization" for a bright, precocious, endearing, and downright good 5-year-old female (my brother's child), and I know that I have used the rhetorical method every bit as much as the many other theories of child-rearing in which I consider myself knowledgeable. Recently an Indianapolis columnist wrote, and I am quoting here, "Priscilla possesses an uncanny knack .... for surrounding herself at all times with magnificently talented, handsome young men who simply worship her." (THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES, March 21-April 4, 1983, p. 3) Upon reflection, I had to admit as to how that was a pretty accurate description of my social life these days! Why, I am even capable of peak sexual experiences and regularly engage in parapsychological phenomena!! Am I hot, or what?!! NIRVANA!

All of which leads me to one irrefutable conclusion. I must have had a helluva rhetorician as undergraduate speech teacher and debate coach, and later, as mentor, role model, and friend. For which I can only say--sincerely, humbly, and profoundly--thank you. Thank you, Nicholas McKinney Cripe.

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PLEASE NOTE:

For a full appreciation and understanding of this paper, the reader might do well to be familiar with the work of Freud, Jung, Adler, Ellis, Horney, Sullivan, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Perls, Glaser, Brandon, Janov, Gendlin, Wilson-Schaef, as well as activities associated over the past 20 or so years with the National Training Laboratory, the Esalen Institute, and EST.